

PROPOSED KENTUCKY BOARD OF EDUCATION  
2010 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

**PRESCHOOL**

**Pre-K Learning Opportunity Expansion**

***Expand pre-K learning opportunities to 200% of poverty level for 4-year-olds.***

There is a growing body of research showing that focusing educational efforts on the early years yields economic and societal benefits that can rival more traditional economic development projects. Long-term studies reveal that adults who participated in quality early education programs as children, compared with those who did not, have higher lifetime earnings, higher rates of home ownership, lower arrest rates and less need for social services. The Kentucky Board of Education encourages the General Assembly to build on the traditions established in the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act and later early childhood innovations to assure that all of Kentucky's youngest citizens have access to quality preschool opportunities in their communities. Raising the current limit of 150% of poverty to a higher level would enable more children to participate in this opportunity.

***LOCAL FACILITY FUNDING CAPACITY: SCHOOL FACILITIES EVALUATION  
COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS***

The 2006 budget bill required the Kentucky Department of Education, in partnership with the School Facilities Construction Commission, to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the processes for planning, funding and maintaining school facilities. Local superintendents, finance officers, facility managers and other local school personnel, worked on this effort. The group recommended a number of changes to state statutes, including the following:

**Taxing Authority**

***Amend KRS 157.440 (Facilities Support Program of Kentucky) to increase the five-cent equivalent tax rate for facilities to ten cents. All districts should be required to levy ten cents. Those districts already levying ten cents or more are authorized to levy an additional five cents, but not required. All facility funding (except the growth levy) should become part of the FSPK program.***

Local districts need additional funds to meet the facilities needs of Kentucky's school districts. Increasing the required tax rate for participation in the FSPK from five cents to ten cents ensures continuation of an equitable program, with the addition of both state and local funding. For just the current five-cent only districts, this would provide an estimated \$83 million at the local level total, and if equalized, an additional \$44 million for bonding for school facilities.

## ***INCREASING GRADUATION RATES***

### **Dropout Prevention Grants**

***Amend KRS 158.146(4) to remove priority in the awarding of dropout prevention grants to districts with chronically high dropout rates, remove the requirement to direct 75% of available funds to elementary and middle school students and 25% to high school students, and focus the grant program on supporting promising practices that are systemic, scalable, and replicable, and aligned with the principles of secondary reform.***

Dropout prevention needs to move forward in the context of persistence to graduation for all students and be more closely tied to the overall middle and high school reform agenda.

KRS 158.146(4) requires that priority for grants be given to districts that average over a three-year period a dropout rate of 5% or more. When the statute was enacted, that criterion captured a large number of districts. Today, because of the progress that has been made, the number of eligible districts is much smaller. Because these districts must receive priority, some districts that would not otherwise be recommended for funding receive grants repeatedly.

Staff has proposed the following:

- KDE will use part of the state funding to offer mini-grants to school districts to support innovative dropout prevention programs to serve as models that can be easily replicated and sustained in other school districts. These mini-grants would support projects involving high-quality instruction for all students, implementation of relevant and rigorous curriculum for all students, and the establishment or expansion of advising programs (including mentoring, character education, etc.).
- KDE will use part of the state funding to support statewide strategies (including virtual learning), which could be utilized by all districts. This could include the development of performance-based courses and credit recovery courses to be offered through the Kentucky Virtual Schools.

### **Compulsory School Attendance**

***Raise the compulsory school age to 17 in 2010-2011 and 18 in 2011-2012.***

As the economy demands a higher-skilled labor force, research shows that dropouts have fewer chances for success later in life. A 2009 study indicated that less than half of young dropouts were employed, 22 points below the employment rate for those with a high school diploma in the same 16-24 year-old cohort. (Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, Boston, Massachusetts, October 2009). Dropouts are more likely to receive public welfare, have health problems and be incarcerated. An estimated 6,500 Kentucky students drop out of grades 9-12. The compulsory school age would be raised to 17 in 2010-2011 and 18 in 2011-2012.

To be effective this proposal must be supported by the types of resources proposed in the

dropout prevention grant proposal. Resources for more dual credit opportunities, middle college experiences, career learning (CTE), credit recovery, alternative settings, etc., will be needed in order for the additional time in school to be productive learning time. These additional resources will have to be considered in the funding for extending the mandatory school attendance age.

### ***PERSISTENTLY LOW-ACHIEVING SCHOOLS***

#### ***School governance changes***

The work being done in conjunction with the federal School Improvement Grants, the Race to the Top grants, and the temporary increases in Title I and IDEA funding have focused a lot of attention on the persistently lowest-achieving schools (defined as those schools whose student achievement is in the lowest 5% of all schools as evidenced by total percent of proficient/distinguished in reading and math combined for at least three consecutive years) and their issues and circumstances. The guiding considerations in working on these grants have been centered on the question: “With or without the grants, what would cause positive change in our lowest-achieving schools?”. To address these issues may require changes in how schools are governed. The four federal models for governance changes are:

- School closure
- Drastic school transformation by certain specific criteria
- Replacement of the principal and 50% of staff
- Using an external education management organization or entity

Statutory changes will be needed to effect the last three options because they each affect the mechanisms and even definitions of school leadership, principal hiring and assignment, and school governance in general.

#### ***Add chronic, low student academic performance as a cause for removal of a superintendent or school board member (KRS 156.132)***

Student learning is the core function of a school system. It should be a fundamental consideration in judging fitness for these critical roles in public school systems.